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ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN PHILADELPHIA,

JULY 4, 1826.

BY GEORGE POTTS,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

NATCHEZ.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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TO THE REV. GEORGE POTTS.

DEAR BROTHER,

ALLOW us to request the publication of the Address which you delivered on the fourth of the present month, in the Seventh Presbyterian Church of this city. We know you did not prepare the Address with this view. But we think it contains matter worthy of the public eye, and we hope the publication may be useful, in promoting a *religious* observance of our national festival, instead of that merely noisy, intemperate and profane celebration—if celebration it may be called—which has too often been witnessed in our country.

ASHBEL GREEN,
JOHN H. KENNEDY,
WM. L. M'CALLA,
J. J. JANEWAY,
WM. M. ENGLES.

Philadelphia, July 31st, 1826.

A FEW passages in the following Address, were omitted in the delivery. After having resisted several solicitations to make the Address public,—nothing could have induced the consent of the writer, to its publication, but the request of his Brethren, and the motives which they suggested. If this humble attempt, should succeed so far, as to exhibit the propriety of a religious celebration of the great Anniversary, the writer will be content.

Address.

It is natural to man, to value that most, which is obtained at the greatest individual cost. As a consequence of this disposition, we often suffer our recollections of the past, to become faded and indistinct, and our thoughts of the future, infrequent and languid,—while we are deeply immersed in the personal concerns of the present.

When we say that experience proves this to be, a disposition natural to man,—we are far from allowing that it is commendable: it is rather, an ignoble,—because a selfish trait of human character,—this absorption in present, individual concerns. Nowhere are its tendencies, more evil, and therefore, more to be deprecated, than in the case before us;—never does a frequent recurrence to the past become a more sacred duty,—than upon that occasion which has called us together to-day. To God, and to our forefathers, we owe our grateful remembrances, of that outpouring of blood, those hard fought battles, those dearly earned victories, those toils

and dangers,—in consequence of which, we are what we are, this day,—a nation, whose privileges are so numerous, so stable, and so universally diffused, that, like bread and water, many of them have come to be considered among the necessities of life, least valued, because most common.

To prevent in some degree, this unworthy forgetfulness, to which we have alluded, it has ever been considered an useful device, to set apart stated periods, for the special commemoration of great events. We take advantage of this principle of association, and lay before you a few reflections, which the recurrence of this Anniversary naturally suggests, and which we hope will prove useful to us,—especially in our relations as American, Christian patriots. The numberless and undeserved blessings, which we enjoy, surely lay us under obligation to God,—and inasmuch as these blessings were, through his good providence, immediately consequent upon the events of our Revolution, it speaks little for our patriotism, aye, more than that—it speaks less for our Christianity, if we can cease to regard them with admiration and gratitude,—or turn away from the theme, as if it were either improper or unprofitable.

It is scarcely necessary, in this assembly, to insist upon the comparative propriety and duty, of some such celebration of this Anniversary, as that in which we are now engaged. The day, we confess it with shame, has been too generally neglected by American Christians. It has been suffered too long to remain, without any public demonstration of their *peculiar* gratitude. On the contrary, we cannot conceal the fact, that it has been grossly burlesqued and disgraced, at least in a considerable degree, by that spurious patriotism, which thinks there can be no patriotic joy where there is no noisy merriment,—no gratitude which is unaccompanied with curses against enemies, or extravagant praises of the dead, who, could they rise, would be ashamed of their encomiasts,—and no love of liberty, but that which is inspired by whiskey, or the more genteel wine-cup. To a dignified expression of cheerful feeling, we pretend not to object; our remarks are directed against the well-known, and lamentable degradation of a day, which brings with it so many high-minded associations. The evils which have attended its celebration, defy estimate, and loudly call upon the reflecting and truly patriotic, for vigorous attempts at a national reformation. Surely, it is no grati-

tude toward the achievers of our Independence, under God, to pollute their names by mixing them with profanity, or by invoking them from the midst of unmeaning revelry,—and it is a poor return to God,—the giver and guardian of our blessings, to insult his laws.

We are happy, therefore, to hail it as an auspicious omen, not only for religion's sake, but for the sake of pure patriotism also,—that a disposition has been shown, on the part of many of our citizens, to redeem this glorious Anniversary from the follies and vices, which have alas! too commonly accompanied it, and to celebrate it in a manner which better befits its true character for importance and solemnity. The God of Nations, by whose allowance “Kings reign, and Princes decree justice,”—and “who executeth judgment for the oppressed,”—was it not he, who from the beginning, did inspire within the heart of man, the desire of freedom, which has been rightly termed heaven-born, and rightly considered our richest possession, next to the hope of eternal happiness?—When power was arrayed against justice, when the sacred territory of human rights was invaded, when life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,—those unalienable gifts of Him, who is “higher than the highest,”—

seemed ready to fall a prey to a grasping and merciless ambition, and when all that stood opposed to the full grown power of our adversary, was the very weakness of infancy,—who was it, that prospered the cause of righteousness, and, although unseen and silent, smiled upon the apparently hopeless efforts of our fathers, crowned them with glorious success, and entailed upon us, their children, indescribable blessing? Is it not right and just, to acknowledge this kind hand; to lift up to the throne of Almighty God, our sacrifice of thanksgiving; to declare our conviction, that his continued smile is our best security for time to come; and therefore, to invoke his future mercy, upon the land, which he has already fostered, through a vigorous infancy?

There seems, indeed, to exist a very general distrust of any interference in matters of a civil or political nature, in respect to the ministers of Religion. Permit upon this point a few remarks, which may be now, appropriately made.

However unfounded such a distrust as that to which we have alluded, may be, (and we verily believe it is unfounded) we nevertheless feel ready to condemn as strenuously as any one,—their public or even frequent private interference with the particulars of the national or state po-

litics. And why? Because the minister of Christ has other work to do. He has been made the herald of a Master, "whose kingdom is not of this world," and whose claims upon the allegiance and homage of mankind, remain firm and unchangeable, amidst all the confusion and revolution of the world's affairs. To urge these claims, is his great business. But, notwithstanding this, it should not be forgotten, that as a man, especially as a Christian man, he has rights, unalienable and important to him, as a member of the social compact; and that even in his official capacity, he is bound to open not only the Book of Grace, but the Book of Providence also, and to vindicate and set forth to our admiration the doings of Him,

"From whose right hand, beneath whose eyes,
All period, power, and enterprise,
Commences, reigns, and ends."

In every change of empire, while the thrones of kings totter, and fall, and rise again,—in every turning of the vast, complicated, sublime machinery, there is the presence of a master hand. The maxims of Christianity, change not with the changes of the world: from the beginning of time to this day,—there never was a period when it was not true, that "the Lord God, om-

nipotent and just reigneth,” and that “righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach and will be the ruin of any people.” These are topics that befit the house of God, and the assembly of his people. In the treatment of them, the judicious servant of Christ, will be ready to point out their verification, in the conduct of kingdoms, and especially in such events, as this day calls to our remembrance. He will never set himself down to measure the merits of contending candidates for office, or attempt the adjustment of those contests which originate in a petty ambition: but this he may and will do: he will ask your gratitude for God, while he recounts your blessings, urges their magnitude, and points to the struggles through which they were obtained. On all questions of political morality, on all occasions, where the lives and liberties of his fellow creatures are jeopardized, he will, as did many of his ministerial fathers before him,—boldly elevate his voice, and deem it no overstepping of the limits of his official duty, to hold up unjust aggression to the abhorrence of all who hear him, and according to his ability, arouse and encourage resistance, against the demands and doings of unhallowed ambition.

Inasmuch therefore, as the religion and mora-

lity of the Gospel, have relation not only to the personal safety and comfort of individuals, for the life that is to come, but also to their connexions with their fellow-men, in the life that now is,—we may safely determine upon the propriety of an association between Religion and Patriotism upon this memorable occasion. Questions come before us, which intimately concern us as men and as Christians; it is the privilege, the right, the duty of all who are interested, ministers of Christ, as well as others, to employ all their influence, speedily, openly, and energetically, in the support and defence of our glorious institutions.—Thus did many of our fathers during the struggles of our revolution, and to the happy issue, their efforts were not a little conducive.

If we have dwelt too long upon this topic, we trust, the novelty of our situation, will plead our excuse. We turn now, to the more immediate consideration of the subjects, which this occasion suggests.

But we are forced to hesitate upon the threshold of the mighty theme: upon what point in the unbounded field which stretches around us, shall we commence our feeble attempt:—the

past—the present—the future, crowd upon our thoughts, each claiming superior attention and admiration: each forming a subject, to the treatment of which, we are fain to profess ourselves entirely unequal.

Do we look toward the persons and events, which were presented upon the theatre of *past* times?—let it be as learners in the great school of practical wisdom, the school of experience;—and as admirers of that majestic current of human events, which then had its rise, and is now sweeping us along in its onward course to futurity. Is it not our duty to remember God, and the fathers of our Independence?

Do we turn our eyes upon the *present*? let it be in connexion with the past, that we may put a proper estimate upon our privileges, and learn why we should be a grateful, humble, and happy people. Here also we would ascertain what is the kind and degree of personal influence which duty calls upon us, to cast into the stream of public opinion.

Do we look toward the interesting *future*, as every wise and good man should?—let it be, to learn our duties to posterity. We should examine the probable results of present events, and endeavour to dispose their course, so that their

evil tendencies upon future generations may be checked,—and that they may issue in the greatest amount of good to our children and our children's children, that, “when they rise, they may call us blessed.”

From this wide field of observation, we can select a few topics only: confident however, that we cannot go far wrong in the selection, since every subject which stands related to our beloved country, must possess an interest in the eyes of every American.

It is a narrow minded Christianity, which does not often recal, and that too, with no common feelings of gratitude and joy, those events and persons, which in the good providence of God, were made the channels of our richest blessings. It is a Christian duty, full of awful yet pleasurable considerations, to think of the events of the world, as controlled and directed of God: to look on, as wave succeeds wave in the great ocean of human affairs: to reflect that there is not an individual action, which does not bear upon general interests, and which is not intended for the wisest purposes; and that even from war, the scourge of sin, as well as its offspring, are educed some great objects, whose bearings, although we may not be able to tell *how* or *why* it is so,—

shall affect the temporal, and in many cases the eternal interests of man.

No series of events, I am ready to assert, with an assurance of being believed, claims more deserved attention of this sort, than that of which this day reminds us. A half century has now passed away, since the birth of freedom, upon the continent of America; an occurrence, which, taking all things into view, may well be said to have formed *a division line*, between the past and the future, and to have constituted a new and grand era in the history of man.

The origin of such civil and political institutions as those which we now possess in so much tranquillity, and with so blessed a promise of permanence,—is the more interesting, when we consider the untoward circumstances, from the midst of which they rose. To those institutions, the previous spirit and fundamental principles of the European governments were opposed: unless we may except to this remark, the individual case of England, in which the principles of representation, and religious toleration, existed at least in some degree.—We may add to this, the unfortunate issue of all former risings of the Spirit of Liberty, in opposition to the long-established dominion of tyranny. Our own Revolution, dear

to us, as now are the blessings which flow from it, had it proved unsuccessful, would have served, only to swell the list of the numberless attempts of a similar nature, which, because they failed, are looked upon by the world, as rash and premature, or as indications of the impracticable nature of republican principles. And indeed, it wanted not much of just such a fate. When we compare the strength and resources of Great Britain, and all the power which her colonies could muster, we may well liken it, to the arm of a full-grown and muscular man, and feeble childhood; and when the first gun was fired, which put war between the child, and its unnatural protector, the sound indeed echoed through the world, the generous and brave, pronounced the effort, just and noble,—but all predicted that it would prove fruitless.

The event proved such predictions mistaken, although so well founded in all appearance. True, we were without a navy to protect our coasts, while our enemy was at that moment, as she still is, the greatest maritime power of the world:—we had none but an undisciplined army of militia; our enemy could pour in upon us, her legions of veteran officers and soldiers,—and thus, as to physical force, the prospect of a suc-

cessful Revolution, was indeed a faint one. But in spite of these unpromising circumstances, the victory was ours: and this was the token of success, this which turned the scale in our favour: from the one end of our land to the other, there was heard, as it were from heaven, a voice which called upon the continental statesmen and generals and ministers of religion and hardy soldiery, to come forth and do battle in the most sacred of all causes,—the cause of justice, of freedom, of independence; and there was soon stirred up, a spirit which required something more than the arms and subsidies of the oppressor, to destroy.

The war thus commenced, was strictly defensive: it originated in the injustice of those, from whom we had a right to look for protection, and not oppression. Grievances had been borne, until they were no longer tolerable: an unjust and destructive policy was discovered, in exorbitant demands upon a people who had no voice in the national legislature: what was to be done? In accordance with the mild and pacific precepts of Christianity, the oppressed asked as a boon, what was theirs as a right; they had recourse to reasoning, to entreaty, and to appeals to the generosity and even compassion of their

oppressors. Again, what was to be done? their entreaty and expostulation were met with unbending pride and contumely: their prayer for redress was spurned: instead of being righted, the power upon whom they acknowledged dependance, manifested an intention to alienate still further, those things without which, life is miserable: the Christian law of reciprocity between nation and nation was utterly disregarded:—who then will deny that they owed it to themselves, to their posterity, and to the hallowed principles of justice, to show their sense of the grievous injuries they had sustained,—to unfurl the standard of opposition, or rebellion as it was then called, and to guard by force what could not be guarded by entreaty, praying the while, that God would show the right.

Never contest was commenced upon more hallowed principles,—never was the plea of necessity urged with greater truth. Acting upon such principles, and under such a plea, America “obtained help of God.” He raised up in her behalf, gallant defenders: especially did he give her a Captain for her armies, whose character was a singular combination of excellencies, such as seldom fall to the lot of one individual: upon his undaunted enterprise, unwearied zeal, pure

principle, and bright example, depend in a great degree, the present excellency and solidity of our institutions. With such a leader,—aided by men after his own heart, success crowned the efforts of the weaker: in vain were our borders, on one side, attacked by savages,—on the other by mercenaries,—in vain did fleets line our coasts,—and armies ravage our country,—in spite of the difficulties of extensive and close co-operation over so wide a territory as ours, in spite of cold, nakedness and hunger,—a poor, oppressed and obscure collection of colonies, which had grown up through neglect, and difficulties, and had never before emerged from insignificance,—came forth in the view of men, with armies and statesmen, whose wisdom, moderation, bravery and perseverance, claimed the admiration of the world.

In recalling these circumstances, we disclaim any intention to foster the jealousies, which have too long existed between America and the people from whom her revolution separated her. God forbid! The contest is over: the sounds of the battle are dying away upon our ears, and it becomes us to cherish those mutual feelings of respect and friendship, which begin to characterize our connexion. But we may be allowed

to revert to the past with feelings of honest gratulation, that our Revolution was not commenced or carried on in injustice: that our demands were reasonable, our aim honourable, and the means employed, justifiable. Besides this—when in vindicating the necessity and justice of the great enterprise, we are obliged to condemn the injustice of the measures which rendered it necessary, we can do so, without being suspected of the unchristian intention, of stirring up, the now slumbering spirit of discord, since we pretend not to identify that government as it once was, and as it now is. We recal the circumstances of revolutionary times, because we would discharge a debt—a debt of gratitude, which we owe to God, and to our gallant fathers, who expended the vigour of their strength, and poured forth their best blood, in the purchase of our great blessings. This Jubilee of Freedom, tells us of battles fought, and battles won,—of statesmen, ministers of Christ, and brave generals and soldiers, upon whose wise legislation, constant zeal, and intrepid and well directed energies,—as the instruments of Providence, was made to depend the long catalogue of our civil and religious privileges; and we must say,—that being better to man, than his best life's blood,

they call so loudly for gratitude, that he is not an American Christian, who can listen to the appeal with apathy.

But time constrains us to hasten onward, in our considerations. We have given a feeble but a filial tribute of affection, to those brave spirits, by whom was laid the foundation stone in the temple of freedom. Never would we, their descendants, forget their toils, their blood, their disinterested sacrifices of wealth and ease, their ardent love for the cause of Independence,—because it is through these that the United States of North America, have reached their pre-eminence of civil and religious liberty.

The experiment of a government, the control of which shall remain in the hands of the governed, has now been fully and successfully made, and the past fifty years, are on that account rendered remarkable in the annals of the world. The present peace, union and prosperity of the United States,—a parallel to which is nowhere to be found, since men were first formed into bodies politic,—may be appealed to with confidence, as a triumphant refutation of those theories of government, which have hitherto prevailed in the old world, to a greater or lesser de-

gree. We have satisfactorily demonstrated, that perfect order and stability may characterize a government, in which there is no combination of Church and State; and that the political power may be safely trusted to the care of those from whom it really emanates, the sovereign people. And thus has been practically exemplified, that true and beautiful theory of human rights, so long and so ardently admired by the good and liberally minded of all nations,—the theory which makes all men “free and equal.”

It is very obvious, that a powerful impulse has been given to the world, within a century and a half, the effects of which though partial, have been highly important and beneficial. One, and the best of its results, was the diffusion of correct sentiments upon the subject of civil liberty. The spirit of reform, which had been so long, and alas! so successfully held in abeyance, by its antagonist, the spirit of blind veneration for whatever is *old*,—(a veneration too which has most commonly attached itself to the corruptions rather than to the excellencies of ancient times,) the spirit of reform, which has ever been the dread of despots, and the detestation of the corrupt,—at last lifted up its voice, in behalf of the pure principles of human right. Inquiry was

excited, knowledge diffused, and a wild impatience aroused in the hearts of men, to rid themselves of the abuses to which they had long submitted in blindness. The kings of the earth, heard its whisperings with terror, and with still greater terror, beheld the convulsions which it every where threatened and in some places actually originated. If the political risings to which we allude, were attended in some instances, with evil consequences,—there was still not a little of good, real good produced from them. The revolutions of France, of Spain, of Greece and of the vast continents of America, show us to what extent the new impulse was felt,—and how utterly impossible it is, for correct knowledge and despotism, to maintain a peaceful union, and walk together in friendship.

But notwithstanding the good effects of these Revolutions,—they have been heretofore partial as it respects the old world: the diseases of age, yield very slowly to remedies. When we look over that interesting portion of the globe,—we are constrained to acknowledge that the circulation of knowledge among the mass of the community is still imperfect, and inadequate to any permanent reform. The supreme will of the government still meets with a blind acquiescence

on the part of the people: the doctrine of legitimacy is still preached: under the pretext of union for the preservation of peace, the rulers have taken counsel, and banded together, for the support of despotism against the liberties of mankind:—as it has been strikingly said by another, they have aimed to effect a “horizontal division of society,”—with all the kings and emperors above, and all the people in subjection below. England is the only exception worth naming, to the general remark, that whatever of practical liberty is enjoyed in Europe, is built upon no other fundamental law, than the law of the monarch’s will. And if this be so, it is but too true (as one of those monarchs, lately deceased, remarked)—that a good, that is, an unambitious and moderate and liberal ruler, is, in regard to the people he governs, nothing better than a “happy accident.”*

Can that be said, fellow Americans,—can that be said of the rulers of our own country? (the contrasts we shall now make, are meant, not to foster pride, but to excite gratitude.) Has it

* It is said that the celebrated Madame de Staël remarked to the late Emperor of Russia, that his *character* was a sufficient constitution for his people:—when he replied, that in that case, he must regard himself only as a happy accident.—Whether he were even a happy accident, is doubtful.

ever been necessary to prevent the free discussion of public measures? or interfere legislatively, with the free press?—Are the liberties we enjoy, guaranteed to us by written laws, which can be changed only by the voice of the people, —or are they dependant upon the will of a single man? Show me where in all the compass of our laws, or by prescription, it is declared that lords spiritual and temporal, are a part of the constitution?—Where do we hear it argued that the governed have not a right to select their governors, and representatives? Where is it true that the representation,—“*vox et præterea nihil*”—is any thing but a correct representation of the “interests, opinions, and feelings” of the country?—Where are there privileged orders rolling in wealth and luxury, while the ignoble poor, the hard-working peasantry and manufacturers are dying from starvation? Above all, a question of still deeper interest, where does an established religion, claim from all, whether willing or unwilling, a tythe of their earnings? where is dissent, purchased by the loss of privileges?

To these and similar queries, God be praised, we can answer with the emphasis of truth, “Not in America.”

We cannot here refrain from noticing a little further, the subject of our religious liberty. Toleration is better than intolerance, liberty better than either. In the governments of Europe generally, an union between church and state, has been considered indispensable to the safety of both church and state: and all that dissenters from the established, governmental religion can be said to enjoy, is obtained by the sacrifice of civil rights, and held upon the principle of *toleration*. But in our own country, the liberty which each man enjoys, to worship as conscience and inclination dictate, is not the fruit of mere permission or toleration, which would imply the *right of civil interference*, but is guaranteed to us by the very letter and spirit of our civil institutions:—it is not the effect of compromise, or attended with a train of civil disabilities, but is entered, a prominent article, in the charter of our civil rights.

It has been said that church and state require the support of each other: this is true, if it be meant that no community can be well-ordered or secure without the influence of Religion:—but that the state can derive no support from religious influences, but by means of an establishment, we deny, and think it sufficient, to appeal

to our own country as a witness to the contrary. It has been in like manner argued, that religious liberty, is subject to the abuse of errorists: to which we answer,—so it is,—but not subject to any abuses, which deserve notice, in comparison with the abuses of its opposite. We are preserved from all of the numerous evils of an establishment: men are not driven into outrage against all religion, on account of its legalized abuses: nor on the other hand, are they led to regard it as a mere engine of state policy, or to profess it hypocritically for the sake of temporal preferment. The pure, spiritual religion of Christ, cannot but be contaminated by such an unhallowed mixture: his is the kingdom of Heaven, and not the kingdom of this world: wealth and power of this world's giving, it seeks not,—but salvation to the souls of men, as denizens of the eternal world.

We think it therefore rightly judged, (whether we assume justice or mere expediency as the basis of our decision upon the subject) that for the sentiments which any man chooses to believe, he is chiefly responsible to God, the Lord of conscience; that next to this, is his responsibility to public opinion: and therefore, that the arm of civil power should never interfere, ex-

cept when the sentiments propagated, shall be manifestly subversive of the ends of civil government. The right of private judgment, unshackled with civil interferences,—the freedom of discussion—the action of mind upon mind, in religious as well as civil concerns, is nothing else than an emanation, from that great principle which originated, and which pervades our constitution, to wit—that God has made men, that they should be free and equal. If this glorious first truth, be liable to abuse,—we ask, where is the truth which has escaped altogether the wilful perversion of man?

Before we leave this part of our subject, we would once more recur, with humble and heartfelt gratitude, toward those who suffered and bled, in the purchase of these great privileges. To them we owe it, that this, the end of the first half century of American independence, finds us at peace, with our own constitution, our own laws, our own governors, our own courts of justice. Under the shadow of our civil institutions, we are in possession of all the freedom which the human mind requires:—our meanest citizens are independent freemen: our highest offices open to the efforts of the enterprising and deserving: the conduct of public men and measures

subjected to a severe scrutiny: proper guards put upon an abuse of power. As a nation, could there be a more brilliant promise of increased prosperity than ours? Is not our infant commerce, already extended to every part of the known world, until it has excited jealousy among those who call themselves the lords of the ocean? Our infant manufactures, do they not already, in some of their branches, rival those of the greatest manufacturing country in Europe? Our population, do the annals of mankind, record any similar increase?—above all, the brightest star in the constellation of American blessings, are we not exempt from the evils attendant upon a religious domination?

Such is the simple record. Who would have ventured, fifty years since, to predict such a condition of society?

It may be pardoned, if we should still farther ask your attention, while we direct a few brief glances toward futurity.

When we regard the present condition of our country, we feel proud of the name of American: and in looking to the future, we anticipate for her, an unchecked career of prosperity and glory. That these anticipations may be realized, may God in infinite goodness, grant. Our object

however, now, is not to predict or describe such a career. Questions of greater moment press upon our attention; of greater moment, because they lie at the foundation of our individual and national happiness. In what manner shall our present blessings be secured to us? How may the spirit of our free institutions be maintained unhurt? How shall our people continue happy, our governors disinterested? Is there no security against those internal and external convulsions which have so often subverted empires? no way, in which we may stand, equally remote from the anarchy of despotism, and the despotism of anarchy?

Let us not deceive ourselves. Nations before us have risen, and shone in lustre, but they have gone down in darkness: and this has been so often the case, that it has come to be considered as the natural order of human things. But tell me not this: the decline and fall of nations are not the effects of "time's sapping motion" apart from other causes; the seeds of dissolution were sown by themselves; for the issue they are themselves responsible. The wreck of the gallant vessel, is attributable to the looseness of its internal management: the helmsman slept: the crew were careless: the anchor was gone: they had lost their chief security.

To come therefore, immediately to the point of our remarks. When we assert, that genuine Religion, with all its moral influences, and all its awful sanctions, is the chief, if not the only security we can have, for the preservation of our free institutions,—we are prepared for the sneers of infidelity, and suspicions of our disinterestedness in regard to established religions, which we a short time since, avowed. We therefore avow once more our sincere convictions—(and we are speaking the sentiments of that part of Christ's church to which we are from principle attached,) we avow once more our sincere convictions, that an established union between church and state, ever has been and ever will be,—while man continues to be, what he now is,—the prolific parent of corruption in both church and state. What we intend by the position just now advanced, is briefly this. The preservation of our constitutional rights, from the very nature of our government, must be entirely dependant upon the sound character of public opinion—a source of powerful influence, far greater than that of fleets and armies:—the character of public opinion, again, will depend upon the kind and degree of religious and moral principles, operating upon the community: and finally we assert that the ge-

nuine effects of the religion of Christ, wherever it prevails,—we mean in its purity—are the dissemination of correct knowledge, not through one, but through all classes of society—a high tone of moral feeling,—and thus, additional strength to the bonds of interest, which hold society together. And dare even the bitterest infidelity deny it?

That the principles of a pure religion are necessary to enforce the sanctions of moral obligation, preserve inviolate the rights of individuals, and give permanent success to any attempts in favour of the great cause of civil liberty, is proved to demonstration, by the anarchy in which the French revolution so disgracefully terminated. The disastrous issue of this attempt, which at first shook all Europe to its centre, teaches us one lesson of deep import:—it is this: that where the laws of God, are disregarded, there human law, will assuredly be disregarded also: that where eternity and future retribution, are believed to be mere chimeras, there we shall see the consequence, in an abandonment of the duties which lie between man and man, wherever the discharge of those duties, interferes with what is esteemed present self-interest: and finally, that where such moral obligations are overstepped

with impunity,—there is nothing to prevent the unhappy catastrophe; the weak become victims to the strong—the powers of government are grasped into the hands of a few, or of one—the rights of life, property, and the pursuit of happiness, are a prey to the ambitious and designing—while the darkness of despotism, that curse of human degeneracy, is allowed to envelope the unhappy multitude.

Are we told, that men who acknowledge no religious principles, often make good rulers—that private and public character may be directly opposite to each other, the one, very good, the other very bad:—a reply is at hand. We would ask, whether much if not all of the excellencies of the public character and actions of such individuals, be not secured to us, by the force of public opinion, and of public opinion alone? and whether if public opinion be poisoned by vicious influences, we could hope that rulers of corrupt private principles, would not carry that corruption into their public administration? On the contrary, is it probable that a community who select their own rulers, and who possess the stamina of pure principle to guide them in the selection, will be disposed to sustain in office, men who are of notoriously corrupt character, guilty

of an ambitious grasping at power to the neglect of their duties, as public servants? The thing is impossible: public opinion must first of all become tainted, the people themselves must first of all become indifferent to the blessings of liberty, before they can forget to keep a vigilant eye, upon those who hold the reins of government, lest the possession of power may prove too strong a temptation to an abuse of it.

However therefore, we may value those high achievements, those successes in lawful war and commerce, that spirit of literary refinement, which are shedding their lustre around our country:—however we may value the increase of our wealth, the abundance of our natural productions, and our internal resources and improvements—we would not look upon them as our best national characteristics. To prevent so mistaken a pride, as that which we are tempted to cherish, on these accounts, we have but to turn our eyes upon those ancient empires, which have set in endless night—Babylon, Assyria, Greece, Rome! had they no cause to boast themselves of wealth, military glory and literary refinement? Again, let us turn toward the kingdoms and empires of modern times, and tell me what they now are, in spite of their renown and the splen-

dour of their arts, and arms, and literature. What do we see, if it be not that the mass of their population are groaning under the yoke of legitimate despotism, the thrones of their monarchs upheld by the bayonets of standing armies, and in many cases, justice a boon, dispensed only at the option of tyranny? Aye—however we may be dazzled at this distance, by their external splendour, when we approach and examine their internal condition, the delusion vanishes: we find a putrid carcass, clothed in gorgeous apparel: here—the pomps and vanities of a court, and within hearing the cries of starving hundreds! in a city resplendent with glorious edifices, we behold the multitude of its people, plunged in debasing ignorance, and given up to vice:—a privileged aristocracy grinding the faces of the poor,—the poor involved in wretchedness, a prey to despotism.

Fellow citizens, we present you this melancholy picture, not because we delight in human misery, or that we should feel proud of our exemption,—but that we may learn from it a lesson of warning and humility. How firmly set, now seems to be the foundation of our civil and religious liberties! how rapid, our progress toward wealth, internal improvement, science, and

letters! But was not all this, to a degree, the case of those nations, over whose present calamitous deterioration of character we have been lamenting? and why are they depressed—why are they not now ready to arise and assert their rights?—because—and this is the burden of our remarks—because they are demoralized: and they are demoralized, because they are not under that influence which emanates from the Gospel of Christ. That influence goes to enlighten, to purify, to liberalize, to emancipate the human mind:—it is the friend of schools of learning, it is the enemy of priestcraft:—the chief lesson which it sternly teaches is not, the duty which inferiors owe to their superiors, the governed to those who govern them,—but, the duties which public servants owe to the community,—which all men owe to one another. That influence is friendly to one aristocracy only, the aristocracy of knowledge and worth combined: all other distinctions it levels as unfounded, invidious, anti-christian.

This, therefore, is the sum of the matter. Nations are great individuals: the body politic will partake of the character of the individuals who compose it—and what is the consequence? Would we preserve unhurt the energy of our

freedom,—would we escape the vortex of dissolution, in which have been swallowed up, the lives and liberties of millions of the human kind, who have gone before us—would we maintain the elevation of national character, which we have already gained,—purity of morals, must be the security against public disaster, the means of increasing public strength.—We must as individuals cherish that character, which as individuals we will find to be attended with the blessing of God: with every step she takes toward civil improvement, and the cultivation of the intellect of her sons and daughters, America must take a corresponding step toward the pure principles of religion and morality:—her people must learn that a departure from honest, generous and upright principle, is the worm at the root of the tree: her national policy must show that she has not learned to determine by cold calculations of interest, by a balancing the accounts of profit and loss,—“the preference of truth to falsehood, of humanity and justice to treachery and blood:”—but on the contrary, that she believes there is a God, who judgeth in the earth, and who will weigh in the balances the measures of nations, as well as the acts of individuals,—while we shall be upon those who are found wanting.

But time warns us that we are trespassing upon your kind attention. To turn one moment toward the interests of other nations:—it has been our pleasure,—and a great and exalted pleasure it is—to have witnessed within a few years, the increase of light upon the subjects of civil and religious liberty. We cannot but be grateful, that our own example, has aided, by its influence, the almost entire regeneration of the continent of South America.—But we are forbidden to enter any further into this subject of pleasant consideration. We bid them, God speed! May there be a constant accession of light, to that which they already possess:—may religious, as well as civil freedom, travel hand and hand through all their borders,—and the blessings of the Almighty rest upon them.

There is another land, for whose misfortunes we would drop a tear of sorrow: a land, associated in the mind of every man who has perused her ancient history, with high-minded recollections of statesmen and orators,—and of deeds of glory done in defence of republican principles, which will be rivalled upon the page of history, only by the heroic achievements of their posterity.—In her late struggles, despair has nerved her with unforeseen energies; enfee-

bled by long submission—she has encountered a foe, ruthless beyond imagining, and inspired by a religion, which supplies to its votaries, the strongest incentives to an already barbarous and exterminating spirit.

Hitherto in the midst of difficulties, which put her contests so far beyond the struggles of our fathers for the independence we enjoy, she has maintained the battle almost alone. She has appealed once and again, to this free people, for sympathy, and more substantial assistance:—to these appeals, there is lately added another: a cry of desolation, from the massacred of Missolonghi.—What have we done for this noble people, as they have, to the astonishment of the world, proved themselves? They plead our common faith, our common humanity, our common desires for republican freedom.—Have we learned to count as nought the blood of our own fathers? The aid already given,—is it all that can be supplied from the fountains of American generosity? Oh! no: the imploring look, which a Christian people, a people in contest for the sacred rights of man,—cast toward our happy country, will not be thus coldly met. What they beseech as a gift, we will bestow as a debt: the happiest nation under the whole heaven, *owes* it

to the most miserable. We owe it to humanity, we owe it to the eternal principles of equity, by which our fathers fought, and for which they bled, we owe it to our esteem for the Gospel of Christ, we owe it to our desire to see despotism—that putrid member of the world’s society—cut off, before it shall any further destroy the fairest works of God.—On such foundations Greece builds her claims for the assistance we can bestow, and I feel a confidence that her claims will still be met, to a greater extent than heretofore. We cannot surely, suffer the continental nations of Europe, to outrun us in the race of benevolence.

Finally, we commend the cause of the oppressed throughout the world to the care of a kind Providence, having this assurance, that “He who is higher than the highest, sees the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and judgment in a province,” and will “make bare the arm of deliverance.” May the liberty of body and of soul, on account of which our beloved country, stands distinguished, become the possession of all men under the whole heaven. This is the grand structure, the glorious temple, by which our happy America, is already best known—its foundation was sprinkled with the

blood of our forefathers: to it, the oppressed of other nations have fled, and found the repose they sought for, within its capacious bosom:—the supreme laws which control the dwellers within its sacred precincts, recognise no difference between man and man, but that which originates in intellectual and moral worth:—the arm of the oppressor dares not enter to invade the rights of its meanest inhabitant—and each worships, as seemeth to him good, the God of his fathers. Glorious edifice! Hope of future ages! may no evil hand, impair thy beauty, or attempt thy overthrow.

Under the guidance of the holy principles of national righteousness,—beneath the banner of pure religion,—let America continue her career of prosperity. Hail! the land redeemed with blood! Hail! the heroes, the purchasers and guardians of our liberty! All hail! the Father of his country! May thy children never forget the toil and suffering, through which their privileges were obtained, but manifest their high esteem and gratitude, by striving to secure them!

America marches onward! she hath already lifted up her voice in behalf of the oppressed of other people,—she has warned away the attempts of those who would interfere with the new-born

liberties of her neighbouring brethren! may there be no foul blot upon the “star spangled banner,” under which she has hitherto moved triumphantly!

King of kings! and Lord of lords! smile upon the land of our birth! It has been the secure refuge of thine own oppressed people! Grant to the dwelling place of Liberty, thy benediction.

Within a few hours of the time, when this Address was delivered, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson departed this life: the first, about six o'clock, the latter, about one, of the 4th July, 1826. In several respects, these were no common occurrences. It is not too much to say, that as coincidences, they are the most striking, of all which are recorded in history.

These individuals, were,—rather beyond the ordinary sense of the words,—*great men*:—great in intellect and acquirement, still greater for their unbounded attachment to the cause of Independence. Both members of the 1st Continental Congress,—both upon the committee, appointed to frame a declaration of rights,—one, the writer of that declaration, the other, its “ablest advocate,”—both raised to the highest dignities of the Republic, by the voice of the people, and upon those principles of suffrage, to the firm establishment of which, they had so greatly contributed,—both retired to the privacy of domes-

tic life, with the sincere veneration of their countrymen—both were called away by the messenger of God, nearly at the same hour of the same day. These are points of coincidence, sufficiently remarkable: but how much more remarkable is it, that the day of their death, was the Anniversary, and still more, the Jubilee, the fiftieth Anniversary of our Independence.

Of their characters we shall say nothing: except, that whatever opinions may have been formed of some of their individual acts,—their names will descend to posterity, as the names of statesmen and patriots, of no common character.

The writer cannot forego this opportunity of one or two remarks upon a subject of great importance to our beloved country.—It might have been expected that he would at least have noticed in his Address, this most interesting topic, but he was withheld by several considerations. Slavery, that dark blot upon the history of our country, that incubus, under whose terrible weight, the welfare of the south particularly, is depressed, is an evil, in proportion to whose magnitude, must be the care, the circumspection with which it is treated. There are few wise men, few liberal and enlightened men, in any part of our land, who do not rather sympathize with, than condemn their southern brethren, in relation to this point. The evil is more widely and deeply felt in the South, than in the North:—and plans for its removal are very frequently, the topics of conversation. To these facts, the writer, whose lot it is to live in the southern section of our union, is a witness.

Declamation, we ought to be sensible, can be of no avail, except to aggravate and embitter. It is a subject which requires the coolest consideration. Misrepresentation should be most carefully avoided, especially misrepresentation of the tempers and disposition with which this important subject is regarded, in the South. Precipitancy, will undoubtedly be the parent of evils, of the most awful kind,—while a deliberate, steady, persevering union of forces, for the pursuit of this grand object, is the only means of removing the evil, and with it the dangers of slavery. That philanthropy and patriotism, as well as self-interest, call loudly for some efforts to this end, it requires no reasoning to prove, and the writer of these scattered thoughts, most devoutly prays that the time may soon happily come, when our country shall enclose within her bosom, none but freemen.

While, therefore, circumstances prevented him from fully noticing this subject in his Address, he would deprecate the idea of a want of interest upon this most interesting and important subject. The inquiry,—how shall the evil be removed—does and ever will occupy a prominent place in his thoughts: and, accordingly, it is with the highest gratification, he has heard of the present success of the efforts to colonize the free people of colour. The Society formed for this purpose, he considers to be entitled to the patronage of the liberal minded of the North, and of the conscientious of the South. May the Almighty prosper, what appears to the writer, to be the only *hope* of this country, in reference to the subject of slavery.

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